Surprise! 'Blood Beach' is just another run-of-the-kill horror flick

Louisville Times rating: ★★

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review

What can you say about a movie co-produced by a man named Sir Run Run Shaw?

Just this: "Blood Beach" consists of a monster, a beach, some police and about half a dozen dead people.

Surprise!

It opened last night at the Oxmoor, Raceland and Westland cinemas.

Shaw (or "Sir Run Run," as he's known to close friends) has made a fortune as a kung fu movie impresario, and "Blood Beach" is probably one of the classiest films he's ever been involved in.

How depressing.

It's not that there's anything particularly wrong with the film — in fact, it's a little better than most recent mutilation movies, thanks to a fair amount of humor in Jeffrey Bloom's script.

But it's just another chapter of the same old story — girl meets monster, girl screams, girl gets eaten by monster.

This time the banquet takes place on a California beach. Every once in a while, the sand starts to shift a little, and before you know it, someone is pulled down into a grainy grave. Unfortunately, Frankie Avalon and Annette Funicello never show up.

The police are called in, and the area around the beach, including a nice, scary-looking amusement park, is cordoned off. Guess where the monster lives.

There's the usual cast of characters: The good-looking member of the beach patrol (David Huffman); his not-quite-so-good-looking girl (Mariana Hill); the harried police captain in charge of the thing-hunt (John Saxon); the pipe-smoking scientist with the foriegn accent (Stefan Gierasch); the rebellious police sergeant (Burt Young).

Since they're the good guys, they don't get eaten, but they come close a few times.

Young walks away with the picture, such as it is — he plays a cop from Chicago who chews on cigars and wears a wide-brim hat. Young's character is a "Columbo" sterotype right down to his wrinkled underwear, but he makes the most of his role, which consists mainly of one-liners.

There are a few implausible moments. For one thing, the monster slides under the sand with amazing grace — we see nary a ripple until it gets ready to chow down. Hoping we won't notice this, the producers throw in a bunch of nubile young lovelies in string bikinis and guys with blond hair and golden brown, bulging biceps. It's a semi-successful diversion.

Another dumb moment comes as the result of Horror Movie Law #1: When you find out where the monster/psycho/toxic waste mutant is hiding, then by all means go look for it. So, even though five people have disappeared, our heroine decides to search for the monster in a deserted, cobwebbed, mildewy basement. She's armed with a flashlight.

That plot convention never has made any sense, but a good horror movie keeps us from thinking about it. This one doesn't.

The cast is better than you might expect. Huffman and Hill are convincing, even though their dialogue consists of lines like "Don't go in there!" and "Are you all right?" Saxon is fine, and Gierasch is suitably scientific.

Most people will go to "Blood Beach" expecting to scream and cringe a few times, and they won't be disappointed. But if you want anything else out of a movie — intelligent entertainment, say, or anything that lasts longer than a jolt of adrenalin — then skip it.

The sad thing is that a lot of people don't want anything else.

SENSITIVITY RATING

Most of the devourings are more spooky than bloody, but there's a flash or two of gore. Profanity. No nudity. Rated R.

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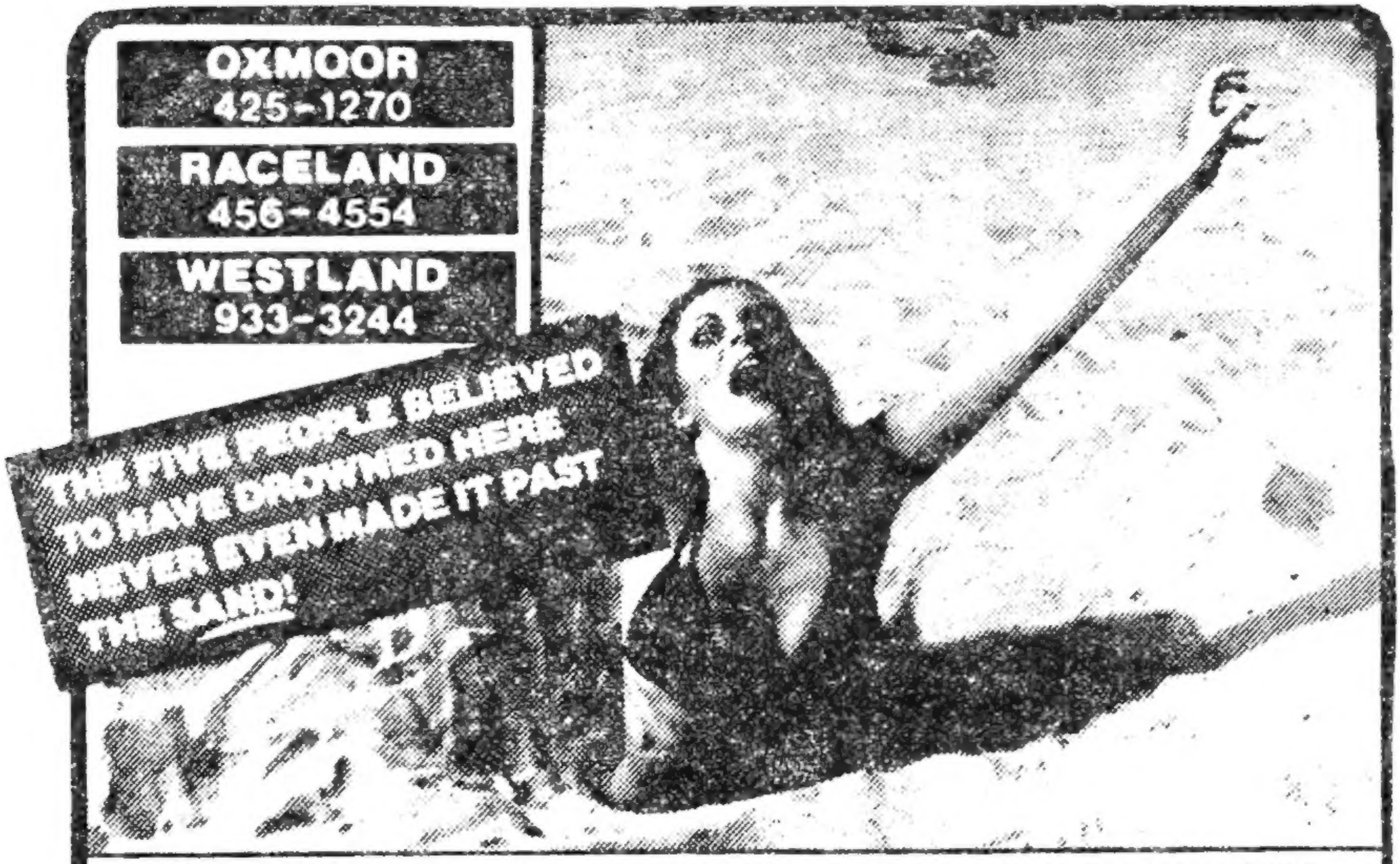

JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT IT WAS SAFE TO GO BACK IN THE WATER
—YOU CAN'T GET TO IT.

BLOOD BEACH

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